



Washington State Senate

# The Benton Bulletin

17TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT UPDATE FROM SENATOR DON BENTON

## 2003 SESSION UPDATE

Less than one month remains in the regular 105-day legislative session. The budget, transportation and the economy continue to be the "big ticket" items of the session.

## BUDGET: LIVING WITHIN OUR MEANS

Senate Republicans unveiled a 2003-05 operating budget plan (SB 5404) that has no general tax increase, leaves \$253 million in reserves and protects Washington's most vulnerable citizens.

### Compared to the governor's plan:

- Provides more money for class size reduction (Initiative 728 approved by voters in 2000)
- Provides money for new teacher and classified school employee salary increases
- Eliminates the need to cut 60,000 people from the state's Basic Health Plan
- Provides an additional \$150 million for nursing homes, troubled youth and developmentally disabled services
- Funds three times the number of new enrollment slots at Washington's colleges and universities
- Continues key tax incentives for economic development and the creation of new jobs
- Preserves Medicaid funding for all of adult hearing and vision services and most adult dental

### Key Savings:

- Reduces state employee workforce by 2,300
- Cuts state employee travel, consulting contracts and equipment purchases by 10 percent
- Eliminates most state agency lobbyists
- Freezes state motor pool purchases

## TRANSPORTATION

### Bipartisan Senate transportation budget plan: Effectively and efficiently addresses Washington's transportation problems

SB 5338 is based solidly on efficiencies, reforms and accountability. The proposed gas tax increase of 5 cents per gallon will cost the average driver only \$31 per year. Under the 10-year Senate plan, drivers across the state will see improvements. \$2.2 billion is earmarked for the congestion that clogs our highways and forces companies and jobs out of the central Puget Sound region. \$1.1 billion is targeted for highway construction in other parts of Washington. \$298 million keeps Washington's car ferry system operating so those cars don't have to move into the congestion on major central Puget Sound corridors. The tax will be eliminated when the construction bonds are retired.

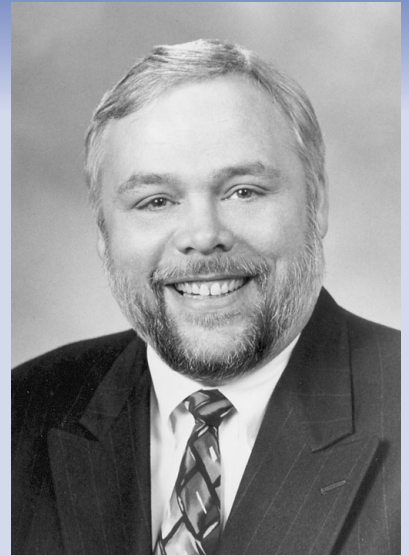
- Each 1 cent increase in the gas tax could raise an additional \$500 million over 10 years and generate up to 3,000 family-wage jobs for Washington citizens. A reasonable and responsible transportation package will create jobs, save lives and improve Washington's business climate.

## GETTING WASHINGTON BACK TO WORK

Less than one week remains for the House and Senate policy committees to approve bills from the opposite chamber. We secured hearings for 15 key "jobs bills" in the House and several others await action. Senate-passed bills that reform civil liability and save millions of dollars in the state workers' compensation program have not yet been considered by their respective House committees. In addition, the House still has the small market health insurance fix on hold. This measure makes employee health insurance plans more affordable to small employers.

### Key regulatory reform "jobs bills" given public hearings in the House are:

- SB 5256 requires the cost-benefit analysis of new rules be completed early in the process and brought into the debate on a proposed new rule.
- SB 5257 requires the governor to approval all new rules adopted by agencies that have directors appointed by the governor.
- SB 5766 requires 200 days notice to affected businesses of significant new rules that impose penalties or sanctions.
- SB 5052 delays implementation of significant new agency rules until the Legislature has met in session and can determine if the new rules fit within policy adopted by the Legislature.
- The savings in these bills represent millions that could be spent on business expansion and job creation.



Senator  
**Don Benton**

### Committee assignments:

- Financial Services, Insurance and Housing, Chairman
- Highways & Transportation Vice Chairman
- Rules
- Economic Development

### Contacting me in Olympia:

Office Address:

109-B Irv Newhouse Bldg.  
PO Box 40417  
Olympia, WA 98504-0417

Phone: (360) 786-7632

FAX: (360) 786-7173

e-mail:

benton\_do@leg.wa.gov

Toll-Free Legislative Hotline:

1-800-562-6000

Legislative information  
on the Internet:

[www.leg.wa.gov](http://www.leg.wa.gov)





Abuse of state’s retire-rehire law would end under SB 5742, passed by the Senate and now in the House Appropriations Committee.

News stories about members of the state’s PERS 1 and TRS 1 pension systems retiring and then immediately being rehired at the same job have prompted many calls to legislators. The state’s retire-rehire law was initially considered to allow retired teachers to come back to the classroom during teacher shortages. SB 5742 lengthens the time that must elapse before a retiree can be re-hired, limits the number of hours the retiree can work in a year without losing pension benefits, and requires that retirees be rehired through established means.

Senate approves package of six bills to fight identity theft and financial fraud.

SB 5715 puts in place standards for a financial fraud alert system. These standards will be used by private industry associations to manage alert systems for the prevention, detection and prosecution of financial fraud. SB 5716 makes it a class C felony to manufacture, sell, or deliver a forged, stolen, fictitious, counterfeit, fraudulently altered or unlawfully issued driver’s license or identicard, or develop and sell or deliver a blank license. SB 5717 criminalizes the possession and production of equipment used to commit financial fraud. SB 5718 exempts bank, Social Security and credit card numbers from public disclosure. SB 5719 outlaws the fraudulent use of credit card scanners. SB 5720 allows merchants to request additional identification for credit card and debit card transactions.

Prescription drug discount program created in SB 5904 to ease the burden of the high cost of prescription drugs for low-income elderly and disabled residents.

Under this measure, the state Health Care Authority is directed to negotiate lower prices for drugs for any Washington resident enrolled in the discount program and who lacks third-party prescription drug coverage. The bill also creates a statewide senior prescription drug information and training program to educate seniors on the safe and appropriate use of prescription drugs. This program is modeled after a successful program initiated in Yakima County in 1998.

Pornography filters for public libraries required under SB 5242 approved by the Senate.

Some community libraries have responded to parental concerns that access to sexually explicit material should not be an option on library computers, others have not. This measure requires all public libraries to use Internet filtering software on all library computers available to the public. To the extent technically possible, the filtering software must block access to material on the Internet that is adult-oriented and sexually explicit.

Senate increases penalties for traffic disruption.

SB 5953 makes intentional and unlawful disruption of traffic on a highway of statewide significance a gross misdemeanor. That charge carries a potential penalty of up to one year in prison, a \$5,000 fine, or both. While supporters of the measure agree that people have the right to protest, they say it should-n’t be done in a way that infringes on the rights and safety of others. This measure is now in the House of Representatives.

Please use this space for any comments, suggestions or problems you would like me to know about. Or call the toll-free Legislative Hotline at 1-800-562-6000.



Senator Don Benton  
109-B Irv Newhouse Building  
PO Box 40417  
Olympia, WA 98504-0417

Place  
First-Class  
Postage  
Here



From: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_